



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE AND SEVENTH ARMY  
UNIT 29351  
APO AE 09014-9351

AEAGX-S

10 May 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR Commanders of USAREUR Major Subordinate Commands,  
HQ USAREUR/7A Staff Principals, and the Director, IMCOM-Europe

SUBJECT: Army in Europe Summer Safety 2007 Leader Engagement Campaign

This memorandum expires 1 October 2007.

## 1. REFERENCES

- a. AR 385-10, The Army Safety Program (soon to be republished as AR 385-1).
- b. AE Pamphlet 385-1, Safety Themes.
- c. Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3, Safety.

## 2. SITUATION

a. USAREUR continues to provide forces to fight the Global War on Terrorism and to support the Commander, USEUCOM, as the Army service component command of USEUCOM. At the same time, ongoing transformation is changing USAREUR's structure through unit inactivations, restationing actions, and reassignments. In addition, USAREUR continues to train and maintain its units so that they remain prepared to support our Nation's priorities.

b. To execute our various missions successfully during these turbulent times, all Soldiers, U.S. civilian and local national employees, and contractors must work together and function as a team. We each have a personal responsibility to support the collective goals of the team. We cannot afford to behave in a way that endangers ourselves or other team members, or in a way that forces them to take responsibility for our part of the mission.

## 3. INTENT

a. My intent is for all leaders down to first-line supervisors to become actively engaged in every aspect of their units, take the necessary steps to improve the unit safety culture (where *culture* comprises our attitudes, beliefs, and behavior), and demonstrate a commitment to the health and welfare of those in their charge. We can and must commit ourselves to the concept of "leader engagement" to bring our safety programs together and further reduce our accidental losses.

b. My goal is for leaders at all levels to personally and collectively assess their leader engagement skills and take steps to improve these skills so that they can bring the off-duty behavior of their Soldiers in line with professional on-duty behavior. Leader engagement will include the visible use of training, mentoring tools, and techniques that ultimately reduce our fatality rate during the period from 1 May through 30 September 2007.

*This memorandum is available at <https://www.aeaim.hqusareur.army.mil/library/>.*

#### 4. CURRENT ASSESSMENT

Enclosure 1 provides the ground and aviation risk assessment for the Army in Europe. By now, units should be maintaining a solid safety foundation by using the USAREUR unit safety certification process and meeting other fundamental requirements of Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3. Units should also be making progress toward meeting the training and assessment requirements of the Army in Europe Fiscal Year 2007 Safety and Occupational Health Plan and the new Army Traffic Safety Training Program. All of this great work has reduced the number of fatalities in the Army in Europe. The decline in our fatality rate, however, has reached a plateau. We can help lower this rate even further by giving attention to the following areas:

**a. Ground Accidents.** We can determine the types of ground accidents that are likely to occur during the months of May through September using historical data and the anticipated environment. This knowledge will help us concentrate our safety efforts where needed.

(1) Fatalities in the Army in Europe will likely occur during the summer season as a result of the following scenarios:

- **Three Soldiers will die as a result of two- or four-wheeled privately owned vehicle (POV) accidents.** These will likely be “at fault” accidents and involve alcohol, late night or early morning driving, and excessive speed. More than one Soldier will be involved in the evening activities immediately preceding the accident.

- **One Soldier will lose his or her life after being struck by a train or other vehicle.** This accident will likely occur late at night or early in the morning and involve alcohol. The individual will probably be alone and attempting to return to his or her quarters. More than one Soldier will be involved in the evening activities immediately preceding the accident.

- **One Soldier will die from falling down a flight of stairs, out of a window, or off a ledge.** Most likely the individual will voluntarily place him- or herself in a dangerous position as a stunt or to impress someone. Alcohol will likely be involved.

- **One Soldier will drown.** This accident will probably occur during the day. The individual will probably start off as part of a group and then become separated. River currents, horseplay, or trying to perform a feat beyond one’s capabilities will be a contributing factor. Alcohol may be involved.

(2) To prevent the fatalities described in (1) above, we must give our complete attention to those in our charge and take steps to influence the culture driving their behavior. We must also realize that preventing fatalities requires individuals to accept responsibility for their own safety, which includes determining the risks involved in their activities and modifying their behavior as appropriate.

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(3) Because of significant deployment activity, an on-duty fatality during deployment operations is a realistic possibility. A fatality in this category will likely be one of the following:

- Electrocution of an en route train guard through contact with overhead electrical wires while climbing on a rail load.
- A rollover or crash of an Army motor vehicle.

#### **b. Aviation Accidents.**

(1) USAREUR had two Class A accidents last summer, both involving poor decision-making. An AH-64D that hovered near a building was significantly damaged when hit by material blown off the building. The second AH-64D crashed during gunnery operations, which resulted in two fatalities. This was our first fatal accident since 2003 when another AH-64D struck wires in the Balkans.

(2) These accidents and Army-wide trends tell us that we can expect high dollar losses and potential fatalities if we maintain our current level of engagement. These accidents will likely involve striking wires or inadvertently hitting other static objects. The most likely causes will be the following:

- **Crew loss of situational awareness.** Challenges with communicating responsibilities and the assumption of duties along with “task saturation” contribute to the loss of situational awareness. Many fatal crashes have resulted when both crewmembers concentrate on a single challenging task inside an aircraft and do not communicate the need for one of them to fly the aircraft.

- **Crew coordination errors.** Coordination errors are often based on overconfidence or inexperience. The need to pay attention to what is happening outside the aircraft often conflicts with the need to manage flight tasks that require attention inside the aircraft. The only way to maintain the proficiency of our aircrews in crew coordination is constant training, critique, and evaluation. Effective crew *communication* is the foundation of effective crew *coordination*.

- **Spatial disorientation.** Unplanned or unintentional flight into clouds or other obscuring conditions without being able to transition to instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) flight continues to be a main cause of Army flight accidents. Since January 1997, 13 IMC-related accidents have claimed 41 lives.

### **5. BASELINED SAFETY PROGRAMS AND TRAINING**

Safety programs and training should be fully in place across the command and include the following:

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- a. Meeting the unit safety certification requirements of Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3.
- b. Meeting the objectives of the Army in Europe Fiscal Year 2007 Safety and Occupational Health Plan.
- c. Assessing driving hazards and making smart driving decisions based on knowledge gained through the Army Traffic Safety Training Program.
- d. Ensuring battalion commanders participate in the Army Readiness Assessment Program (ARAP).

## **6. USAREUR SAFETY COUNCIL MEETING**

The following are observations that I expressed in my wrap-up of the USAREUR Safety Council meeting on 20 March 2007:

- **Go beyond talk and go beyond e-mail.** Take action and get out there to make sure that your intent is being understood and accomplished as you envisioned.
- **OPTEMPO is a challenge; our degree of targeted leadership involvement is a large part of the solution.** There is no question that we are in a fast-paced cycle that creates stress for us, our subordinate leaders, and our Soldiers. At no time in the past has it been more important for all of us to pull together. This requires leader involvement by visibly establishing a presence and reinforcing a culture in which all Soldiers want to support their band of brothers and sisters.
- **Balance between individual and leadership responsibility.** Leaders must do everything in their power to affect the safety culture in their units, which is the intent of this campaign. However, we all must accept responsibility for our own behavior.
- **Although most fatalities occur while off duty, we must not neglect on-duty risks.** We are training on and adapting to new tactics, techniques, and procedures. We are maintaining our equipment. We are moving in support of realignment and training. We are deploying and redeploying. All these missions require us to maintain our hazard-identification processes and implement risk-management procedures. We need to place renewed emphasis on ensuring that the risk and risk-mitigation message gets all the way down to the operators involved through command information and personal engagement.
- **Train as you fight; adapt safety processes through sound risk decision-making to maximize training on skills needed in operations.** Again, we are training on and adapting to new tactics, techniques, and procedures to win the Global War on Terrorism. This does not mean that we should ignore legal requirements, not follow safe standard practices, or make risk

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decisions at an inappropriate level. However, it is imperative that we challenge the system through a competent risk assessment and military decision-making process to find ways to train at minimum risk and give Soldiers and leaders the skills they need to fight, survive, and win in current and future combat environments.

- **There are “complicators” in Europe.** Many factors in the European theater add to the risks we face. Europe has many attractions, and Soldiers are sometimes tempted to travel long distances after a full duty day in the dark, frequently when the weather and road conditions are poor. Alcohol consumption is glamorized. In Germany, the speed on the autobahns is also glamorized and is often restricted only by the driver’s common sense and occasional posted speed limits. The speed limit on narrow secondary roads outside of cities is 100 kilometers per hour. Soldiers need to stop thinking about what they are legally allowed to do and start considering what is sensible.

- **4-day weekends present a long communication timeout.** I have established 4-day weekends in place of family time. This is a long time for leaders to be out of contact with their Soldiers, especially with those who have a habit of engaging in high-risk behavior. For this reason, I recommend that leaders try to make a “mid-leave leader radio check” (encl 2), which is a technique borrowed from the United States Army Space and Missile Defense Command.

- **Complacency kills.** When we become complacent, we let down our guard. Consider these famous last words: “We’ve done this mission a hundred times. There’s no need to do a risk assessment.” “I’ve passed vehicles on this curve a hundred times and nothing has ever happened.” “I need to get my stuff out of the turret. I’ll just climb up on the railcar and get it.” “I drive after having a few drinks all the time and nothing has ever happened.”

- **Leaders from top to bottom have the authority and responsibility to implement good safety measures.**

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF HQ USAREUR/7A STAFF OFFICES, USAREUR MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS, AND SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS**

The *Summer 2007 Campaign* section of the USAREUR Safety website (which can be accessed from the USAREUR homepage at <http://www.hqusareur.army.mil>) provides more information supporting the requirements in this paragraph. In addition, more safety information is available on the United States Army Combat Readiness Center (USACRC) website at <https://crc.army.mil/home/>.

a. Commanders of USAREUR major subordinate commands; Headquarters and Headquarters Company, USAREUR; and the Director, IMCOM-Europe; will—

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(1) Ensure their organizations are in compliance with the baseline safety program tasks, which include the following:

(a) Meeting the unit safety certification requirements of Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3.

(b) Meeting the objectives of the Army in Europe Fiscal Year 2007 Safety and Occupational Health Plan.

(c) Training individuals through the Army Traffic Safety Training Program.

(d) Ensuring battalion commanders participate in the ARAP.

(2) Based on my intent for leader engagement in this campaign, the current accident assessment, and their own internal assessment, develop a plan on how to become more engaged to ensure that unit-level operators are aware of the risks and understand their roles in operations both on and off duty. This requires leader commitment to bringing the message to the unit level in person, through the chain of command, and by targeted command information processes.

(3) Use the information and vignettes in enclosure 3 along with leader engagement ideas and information on the USAREUR Safety and the USACRC websites. You are not required to implement any new programs. You are, however, encouraged to try using mid-leave leader radio checks (encl 3) to maintain communication with individuals of concern.

(4) Use local command information channels to target specific local risk information for the local population, and send requests for wider distribution of information through the USAREUR Safety Office. Where commanders have influence over local media (for example, local newspapers, television and radio broadcasts to military housing areas), minimize the use of random public service announcements. Target specific threats for the time necessary to get the command information message across.

b. The USAREUR Safety Office will—

(1) Produce targeted hazard information for distribution through USAREUR command information channels. This will be a collaborative effort with the Chief, Public Affairs, USAREUR.

(2) Maintain leader engagement information and links through the USAREUR Safety website at <http://www.per.hqusareur.army.mil/services/safetydivision/main.htm>.

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(3) Maintain liaison with the European safety community to share occupational safety and health-emphasis programs applicable to the workforce.

c. The Chief, Public Affairs, USAREUR, will support the USAREUR Safety Office by developing and distributing safety command information targeting specific on- and off-duty risks.

d. The Provost Marshal, USAREUR, will—


(1) Coordinate with IMCOM-Europe garrisons and local police to collect and report instances of high-risk behavior to the USAREUR Safety Office.

(2) Collect *Click It or Ticket, Booze It and Lose It* data from IMCOM-Europe garrisons.

(3) Provide *Click It or Ticket, Booze It and Lose It*, and sobriety-test program feedback to the Chief of Staff, HQ USAREUR/7A.

## 8. SUMMARY

I deeply appreciate your daily commitment to our Soldiers, civilians, and family members. Every day, as I engage members of our team, I am reminded of the trust and faith that parents and family members have placed in us to ensure the safety of their loved ones. We in turn must fulfill our obligation to ensure the Army safety culture is firmly integrated into the structure of their lives so that they can continue to support the Army team, both on and off duty. We cannot let one another down by allowing preventable fatalities and injuries to occur or high-risk behavior to go unchecked. Our active involvement in how and what our team members are doing is a genuine act of concern and will ultimately reward us with culture changes that bring us closer to our goal of *No Loss of Life*.

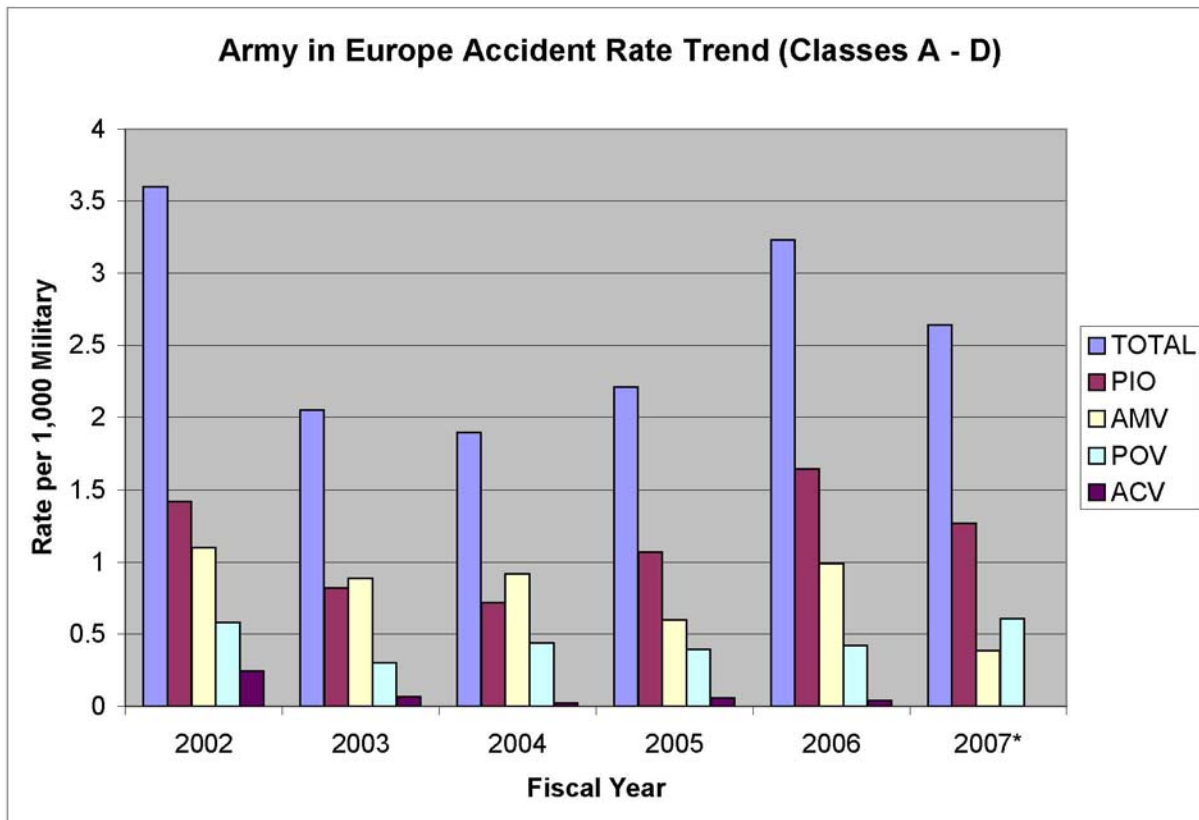


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Commanding

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1. Ground and Aviation  
Risk Assessment
2. Leader Engagement Philosophy
3. Mid-Leave Leader Radio Check

## GROUND AND AVIATION RISK ASSESSMENT

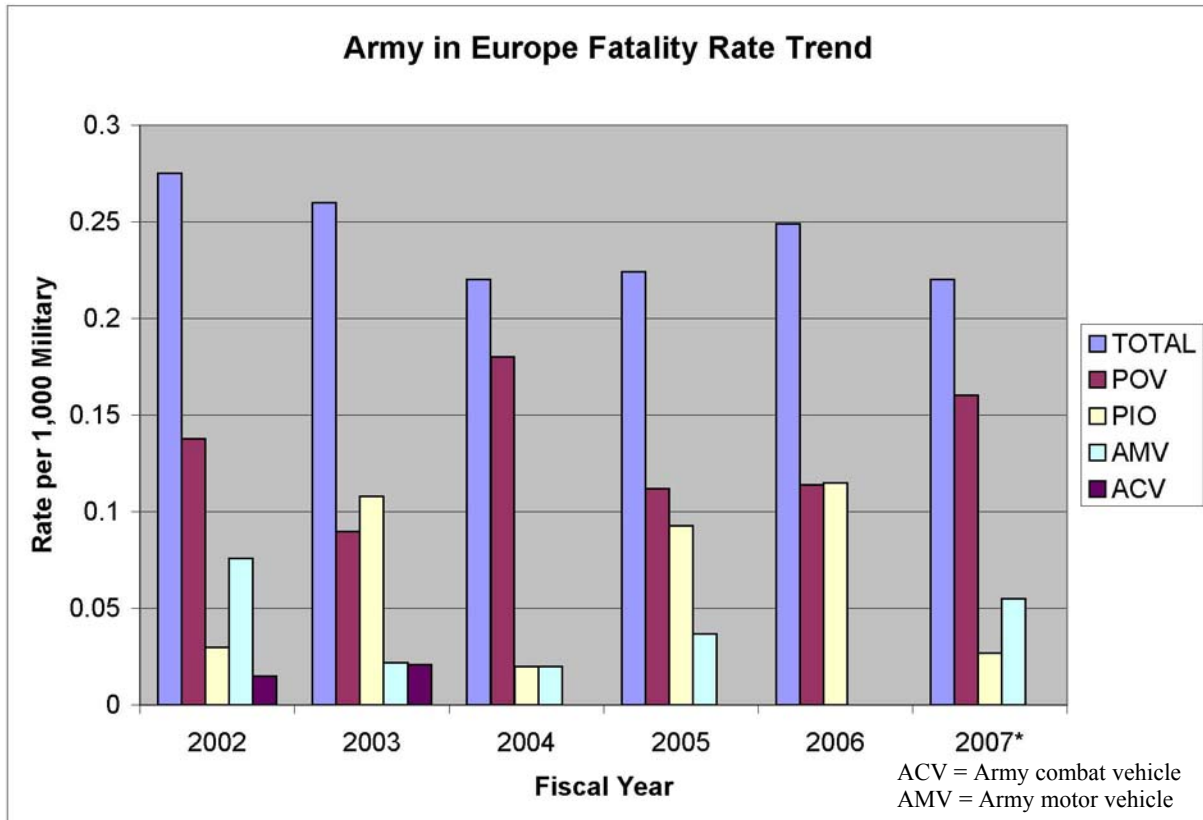


\*Through 28 March 2007

All reported accidents in the Army in Europe from fiscal year 2002 through 28 March 2007 were analyzed by accident type, frequency, and severity. During this period, 759 accidents were reported, with nearly 70 percent occurring on duty. The 30 percent of accidents that occurred off duty, however, accounted for more than 80 percent of our Soldier fatalities. These include persons being struck by cars or trains, drowning, and falling from heights.

The leading causes of vehicle accidents are improper passing, misjudging clearance, driving while fatigued, speeding, and adverse environmental factors. Many mishaps occur after the driver has consumed alcohol.

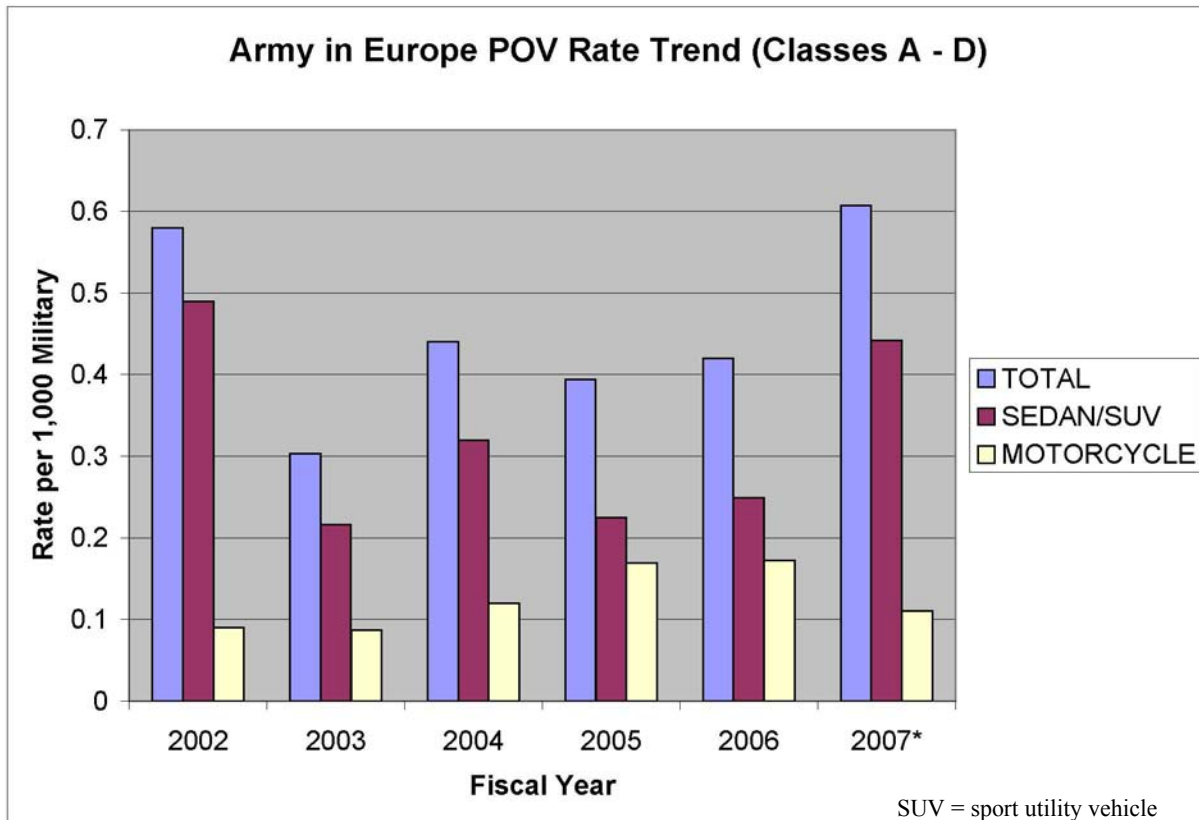




\*Through 28 March 2007

Accidents involving privately owned vehicles (POVs) account for 17 percent of all reported accidents and almost one-third of them are fatal.

Personal injury - other (PIO) accidents are the second leading category of fatalities in the Army in Europe. Accidents in this category include pedestrians who were struck by vehicles, persons falling from windows, and drowning. Alcohol consumption is often cited in accident reports as a causal factor.

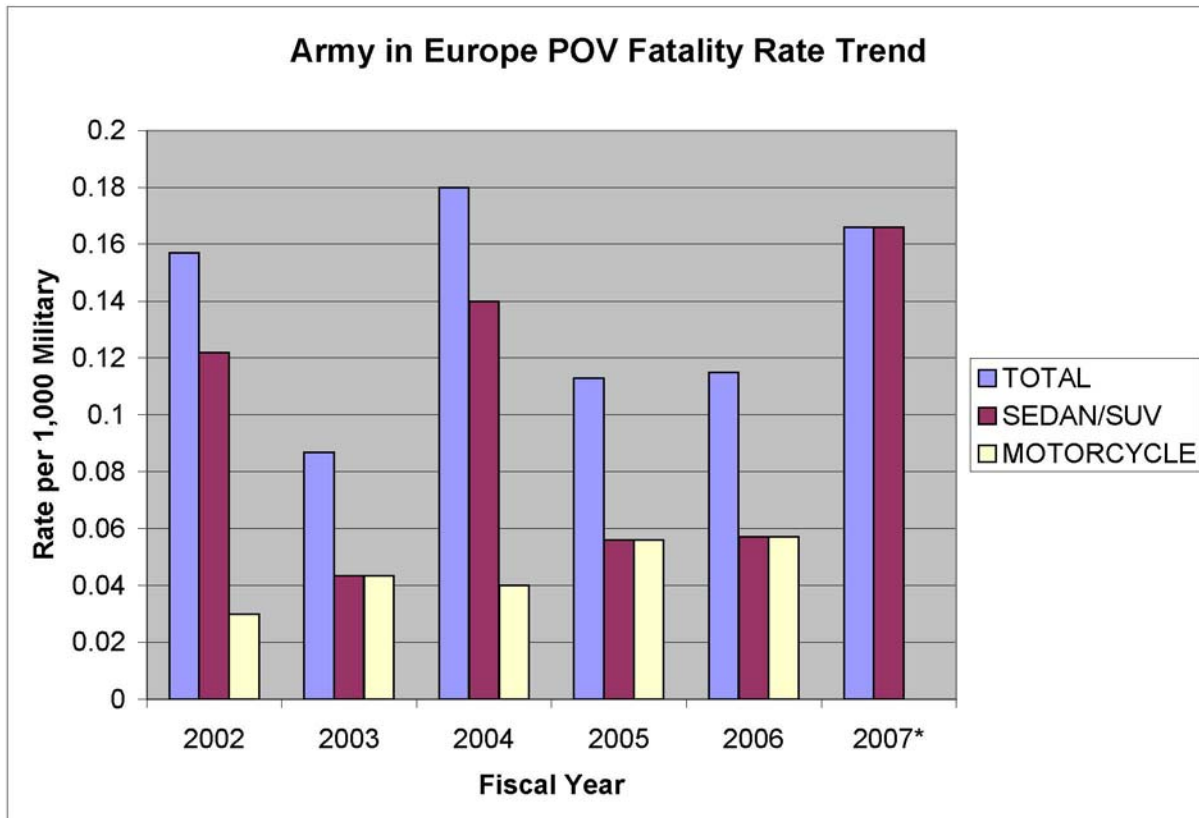


\*Through 28 March 2007

The Army in Europe has suffered an increasing number of motorcycle accidents between fiscal years 2003 and 2006, and the peak riding season for fiscal year 2007 is about to begin. Speed and improper passing are implicated in many of these accidents. While personal protective equipment can help protect against injury in many types of collisions, it may offer only limited protection in high-speed crashes and head-on collisions.

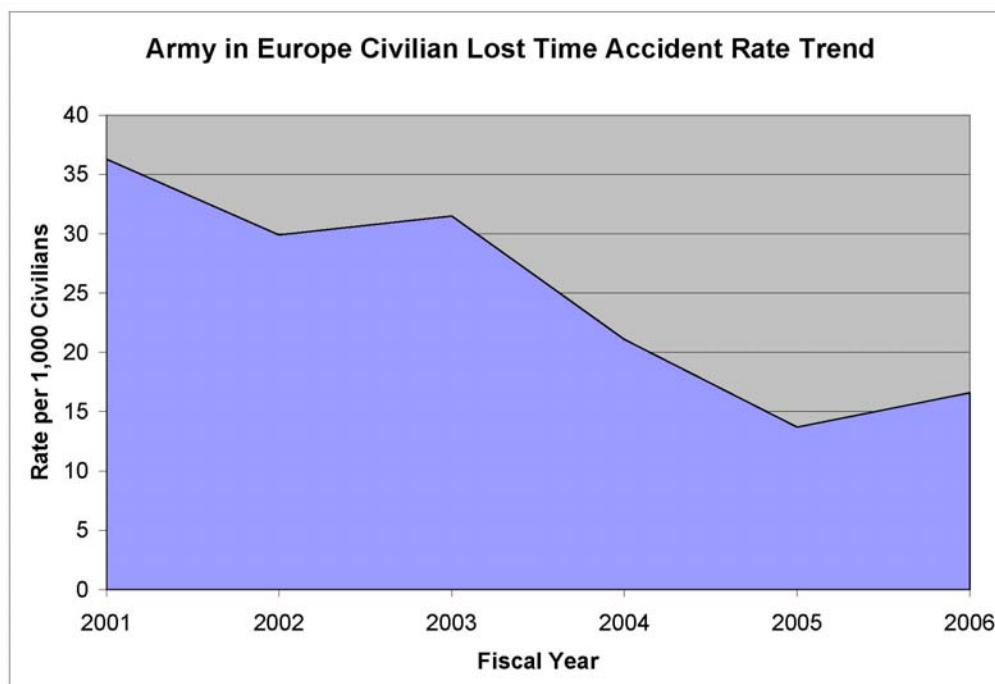
Based on findings from the *Institut für Zweiradsicherheit* (German Institute for Motorcycle Safety), motorcycle riders who are “squared away” are those who—

- Wear full protective equipment whenever they ride, not just on long trips.
- Always check the mechanical condition of their bikes before they ride, not just the oil and fuel levels.
- Constantly think in terms of risks and risk solutions while enjoying their bikes.
- Seek mentorship and training to improve their skills.



\*Through 28 March 2007

About 30 percent of all persons killed or injured in POV accidents are passengers. Accident reports reveal that speeding and improper passing are the leading causes of these accidents, and that the ability to make decisions behind the wheel is often impaired by alcohol consumption. As shown in the above chart, motorcycle fatalities have increased in proportion among all POV fatalities in the Army in Europe.



	Fiscal Year					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Rate</b>	36.3	29.9	31.5	21.1	13.7	16.6
<b>Accidents</b>	99	79	86	58	38	46

**NOTE:** Data for fiscal year 2007 is unavailable.

### SUMMARY

For the entire 6-year period, 672 accidents were incurred by civilian employees in the Army in Europe. Of the total, 406 accidents (60.4 percent) resulted in lost workdays.

The two leading accident causes are manual material handling (MMH) (32.4 percent of all reported accidents) and slips, trips, and falls (STFs) (31.6 percent of all reported accidents).

	Fiscal Year					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Total</b>	200	142	125	82	55	68
<b>NLT</b>	97	59	39	24	15	19
<b>NLT Rate</b>	35.5	22.3	14.3	8.73	5.4	6.7
<b>MMH</b>	72 (38)	40 (24)	48 (33)	26 (14)	17 (13)	15 (9)
<b>STFs</b>	57 (34)	50 (24)	44 (32)	22 (20)	16 (12)	24 (20)
<b>Staff</b>	2,730	2,643	2,730	2,748	2,763	2,767

NLT = no lost time

Numbers in parentheses = number of injuries that resulted in lost workdays

## AVIATION ASSESSMENT

**1. Applicability.** The guidance in this enclosure applies to USAREUR aviation units that are operating in the central region and the Balkans, and those that are deploying to or redeploying from contingency or combat operations.

**2. Accident History.** So far this fiscal year, USAREUR has had only one Class B unmanned aerial vehicle accident and one Class C flight accident, with no injuries. Last fiscal year, USAREUR had two Class A accidents, two Class B accidents, and two Class C accidents. The total monetary cost was in excess of \$28 million. Much more disturbing was the loss of two of our warriors in one of the Class A AH-64D accidents. All of our crashes since 2003 have involved AH-64 airframes.

**3. Accident Categories.** There are no new accidents, only new participants. This is especially true for Army aviation. Army-wide, the primary causes of aviation accidents remain the same. Risk-mitigation tools have been extensively covered in our previous campaigns and in publications and tools provided by the United States Army Combat Readiness Center. We continue to lose our Soldiers and aircraft to the same causes.

**a. Crew Loss of Situational Awareness.** It is easy to become “task saturated” in stressful situations (for example, combat). However, we recently lost two Soldiers during a “routine” gunnery exercise when the crew lost situational awareness and flew the aircraft into rising terrain. The pilot in command (PC) of the aircraft had shifted from his role as PC and assumed his alternate role of instructor pilot when the co-pilot/gunner encountered some navigational difficulties. The PC became task saturated, the crew lost effective coordination and communication, and the aircraft flew past its turn point. The result was the loss of an aircraft and two Soldiers. The ability of crewmembers to distribute the workload while flying and accomplish their missions depends on their ability to communicate effectively.

**b. Crew Coordination Errors.** Crew coordination errors continue to plague us. The susceptibility to distraction while flying is always a great risk and a major contributor to our aviation accidents. The need to pay attention to what is going on outside an aircraft often conflicts with the need to manage flight tasks that require attention inside the aircraft. The only way to maintain our aircrew’s proficiencies in crew coordination is constant training, critique, and evaluation. Effective crew *communication* is the foundation of effective crew *coordination*.

**c. Accidents Caused by Spatial Disorientation.** Unplanned or unintentional flight into clouds or other obscuring situations continues to be a root cause of Army flight accidents. Since January 1997, 13 instrument meteorological conditions (IMC)-related accidents have claimed 41 lives and cost the Army nearly \$209 million. No one plans to transition to IMC on a visual meteorological conditions (VMC) flight, but we must always be trained, confident in our abilities, and prepared for this contingency. This training needs to start before deployment and leaders must ensure that aircrews maintain their proficiency, confidence, and preparedness throughout the deployment.

## 4. Conclusions.

- “Low-risk” and “routine” missions are never low-risk nor routine.
- Effective communication is a prerequisite to effective coordination.
- Maintain focus, commit to a course of action, then execute!

## LEADER ENGAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

(Adapted from various sources on the United States Army Combat Readiness Center website.)

**Objective.** The objective of the leader engagement philosophy is to transition young Soldiers and leaders into a culture in which they want to be successful and part of the solution. This is very difficult to accomplish by lecturing Soldiers in morning formations. It requires a clear message, one-on-one mentorship, and the personal commitment of leaders at all levels.

**Awards for Accomplishments.** One way to encourage Soldiers to do the right thing is to present them awards for their accomplishments. Awards make Soldiers feel good about their service and lets them know that the chain of command is aware of and appreciates what they are doing. Although it seems simple and possibly trite, a pat on the back and a “well done” from a superior, especially from a higher echelon in the command, can have an enormous effect on reinforcing the right behavior and supporting cultural change.

**Engagement on the Line: Under the Oak Tree Counseling.** USAREUR implemented the Under the Oak Tree Counseling process several years ago. It is worthwhile to revisit this process to see how it can be used to exemplify the leader engagement philosophy and what is meant by “full engagement.”

The most dangerous time for our Soldiers is when they have no supervision, particularly when they are off duty. Accountability for them at that time depends on their own good wits, driven by their beliefs on the right way to act, which is directly derived from their non-Army or off-duty culture. How do we get them to stop thinking that they can do anything they want—without assessing the possible consequences of their actions—and help them learn to take care of themselves, make smart decisions, and act on these decisions without supervision?

Safety briefings at unit formations are a challenge. As leaders, we can give Soldiers a briefing and feel as if we have told them what they needed to know. What we have told them, however, may not be effective, because it may not make a difference in their behavior. It is very easy for Soldiers in the formation to think that the commander or first sergeant is talking to the person next to them. This is the reason we need leader engagement and accountability. We need to ensure we do all we can as leaders to communicate effectively and effect a change in the behavior of our Soldiers.

In this case, Under the Oak Tree counseling takes the message provided by the leadership to the platoon and brings it down to a personal, one-on-one engagement between squad leaders and their Soldiers. The end result is a verbal agreement between the leader and the Soldier on which steps the Soldier will take to mitigate the risks associated with his or her plans.

One-on-one engagements require work. Soldiers will tell their leaders whatever they want to hear to get the meeting over with and get on their way. “Sergeant, I’m just going to hang around the barracks all weekend.” At this point, the leader must make an important decision. Should he or she accept that with a “check the block” attitude, or should the Soldier be challenged?

“I think that you do have plans for the weekend. I want to know what those plans are so that you and I can discuss them and come to an agreement on how you’re going to manage any risks associated with them. This is my way of ensuring that we’ll see each other on Monday morning. If you plan to hang around the barracks with nothing much to do, you and I can take care of a few special projects over the weekend. What do you think?”

Pretty soon the Soldier will come around to talk about what is on his or her agenda. At that point, the contact process starts. It opens up to a deal between the leader and the Soldier. It could be that this is the first time anybody has ever talked to the Soldier about his or her planning process. If the leader asks “*What about...*,” “*What if you...*,” or “*What if I...*,” a discussion will begin, the leader will successfully engage the Soldier, and the culture for the Soldier will begin to change. Within 3 to 5 minutes, a verbal leader-Soldier agreement on behavior can be made. Rarely will a young Soldier violate that agreement.

To truly effect a cultural change, however, there must be more to this process. Three of the five steps in the risk-management process have been completed. What about the last two? It is the Soldier’s responsibility to implement the verbal agreement, which is step 4. But step 5—assessing how well the process worked—remains to be completed. Without that step on “Monday morning,” important feedback and process adjustment are missed. This is one important aspect. The other is the “pat on the back” the Soldier gets for a successful report. This is motivation for positive behavioral change.

Will it work as simply and smoothly as this every time? Probably not right away. It takes time to change culture. If a Soldier kills himself on a motorcycle, it is easy to say, “I tried. It’s a tough world out there and I need to accept a certain number of fatalities.” The basic premise behind this attitude is wrong. The bad outcome is certainly not desirable, but it is not a failure. It says that we have not yet been completely successful at penetrating the culture. Dissect it and learn from it. Continue to invest and continue to engage. Continue to insist on accountability from battalion commanders through their first-line supervisors concerning behavioral changes of their subordinates. Discuss with them what and how well they are doing. In time there will be fundamental changes in your organization for the better. It will not be limited to experience; you will see it in teamwork, pulling together, and trust and confidence. You will clearly see an attitude of not wanting to contribute to something that brings discredit to an organization or that directly or indirectly causes the death of a fellow Soldier. They back into discovering what “right looks like.”

**Supporting Videos.** At our request, the United States Army Combat Readiness Center has produced three new short videos, one that summarizes the Under the Oak Tree philosophy and process (Oak Tree Counseling), and a video (Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) POV Risk Assessment Tool) that shows a low-risk, privately owned vehicle (POV) trip review and a more difficult, high-risk POV trip review. These are good tools for mentoring junior leaders and will stimulate discussion and enable them to more effectively engage their Soldiers in this important, one-on-one culture-adjustment process. Videos may be viewed or downloaded by clicking on the *Training* tab on the USAREUR Safety website at <http://www.per.hqusareur.army.mil/services/safetydivision/training.htm>.

**Example of Engaging Junior Leaders.** When assessing personnel for risk, think of the big picture as opposed to individual events. In our attempt to be efficient and deal with the many challenges we face daily, sometimes we concentrate on the issue in front of us and neglect its association with a series of other events. This is similar to the concepts of composite risk management. In neglecting the trail of behavior and possible similar behavior in other individuals, it is difficult to recognize the underlying causes of indiscipline, overconfidence, and immaturity. These become strong indicators that a Soldier or group of Soldiers is at risk for an on- or off-duty accident. As a group, it is also an indicator that the organization may have problems. Engage a group of leaders while out and about. Ask them about these types of challenges in their organizations and ask pointed questions until they start to discuss the issues among themselves. Then, back off and listen.

**The Importance of Command Information in the Engagement Process.** Consider the command information process as a means of letting the entire command know that you want to communicate with them directly.

**Myth:** “All I can do is get my subordinates together, tell them what I expect, and then let them go promote it through the chain of command. If something goes wrong, then I just need to hold them responsible.” Not true. This is one method, but not the preferred one for exercising leadership. As the number of echelons increases, penetrating those layers to effectively motivate young Soldiers is a daunting task. A command information program that penetrates to every last Soldier is needed. In addition, it gives junior Soldiers something they can read that is clearly from the boss and directed to them.

Use command information that spreads a common, to-the-point message uniformly throughout the chain of command and prepares the battlefield. For example, with USAREUR’s recurring rail movements, the timely command information message is, “Do not climb on railcars.” When orders are subsequently issued to perform rail-load operations or on-board guard duties, Soldiers will already have been informed through the command information messages that they should stay off of railcars.

**How Do I Affect Culture?** This is probably the most fundamental leadership question, especially as it concerns safety. The objective is to influence the culture in such a way so that when we are not there, Soldiers behave as they should.

The leader with the most effect is the battalion commander. The most effective battalion commander is the one who sees that most accidents are already predicted. We have done that in this campaign. The critical step forward is taking on a commitment to change.

Troops behave differently when they are off duty. Why? It is a matter of culture. We have two different worlds with two different cultures in the same Soldier. We train Soldiers to be in our culture while on the job, but they retain the culture from which they came. We must understand that the Army’s culture is foreign to them, which makes it easy to revert to their old familiar culture. In many cases, they do not see their behavior under their old culture as bad; it is just what they know.



If you accept that, then the duty of the lieutenant colonel is to bring them fully into the Army culture. The leader in position to be most effective in doing this is the first-line leader. A first-line supervisor will pretty much do exactly what the lieutenant colonel—the battalion commander—asks. So success comes at the battalion level, with the battalion commander teaching, coaching, and mentoring the first-line supervising officer and noncommissioned officer in the unit. They will subsequently influence Soldier culture if the battalion commander provides the guidance and direction.

**First-Hand Evaluation.** In our tactics, we have migrated toward standoff engagements with the enemy. However, in the case of the enemy of risk, we need to close in and go hand-to-hand. Direction to subordinate leaders is necessary, command information is necessary, but you must get down there to get a personal taste of how your message is being received, and lead by example to show a sincere personal interest. That is what makes the message effective and it breeds a desire to please the boss stemming from your genuine concern in the individual Soldier and leader.

Let it be known that the “Old Man” is not afraid to go sit down with a squad leader and a Soldier to do Under the Oak Tree counseling. “Where are you from? Where did you grow up? What kind of norms did you have when you were growing up? How is that culture different from the Army’s?” Then ask the straight-up question, “Specialist, how do you really behave over the weekend? What really happens?” Of course the specialist starts talking about behavior that is considered high-risk in the Army culture, but does not see it as high-risk when off duty.

Then turn to the platoon sergeant, this master of leadership, this great combat warrior, and ask Sergeant First Class Smith what techniques he has to get this young specialist to behave safely—to live by our norms and our culture, and to become off duty what they are on duty. Suddenly the dialogue starts between the two of them. You sit back, listen, and learn. The same questioning process can work for any type of operation. Then two things happen. The word gets out that the “Old Man” is not just good at writing messages, but that he takes the time to go “down there” and demonstrate what he is talking about.

There is only one full-engagement way to determine if what you envisioned is actually happening several echelons lower. You need to go down there yourself and find out. Sometimes the “great idea fairy” spins in a few things and changes the whole intent of what you had in mind. Under the Oak Tree is a good example. The intent of Under the Oak Tree counseling is for a verbal discussion about risks and a verbal agreement about what to do about it. Some well-meaning leaders turned this into a written process of swearing that you had been counseled and a checklist to complete in the name of accountability. The same mismatch is occurring now with signed motorcycle-rider agreements. Though well-intended, it misses the whole point of one-on-one eye contact and meaningful discussion, followed by a personal promise. The agreed on promise and the Monday morning follow-up bring about the change in culture. Without going out there to do a pulse-check with the unit leadership and Soldiers, how would you know if the process was working as intended? Beware of what you think is happening in your formations. You need to get out there, check for yourself, and lead by example.

**Leadership Accountability.** There is a place for oppressive accountability, but it is not the only tool available. When used as the only tool or used at the wrong time, it can become a very negative influencer in an organization and can destroy unity. Many times, alternative measures go further in fostering a desire to do it right and not let anyone down.

As commanders we accept our responsibility and we are prepared to answer under that accountability. But a superior officer can seize the opportunity either to take the oppressive road or the mentorship road in effecting behavior modification. Many times mentorship starts with the question, “What did you learn from that?” From there, it becomes an Oak Tree Counseling—not the incident in question, but about the organization, or what the incident infers about the organization, and course corrections required in the organization to change or eliminate the underlying problems. The desired outcome is for the leader being counseled to see a way forward and to desperately want to take action to accomplish the mission and to keep something like that from ever happening to his or her Soldiers again. That is the type of positive mentorship where that individual is changed forever because of internally generated positive motivation.

It is essential to leave a clear understanding that this is not a free pass. If there are indications of similar problems in the future, it will require a different approach, but there is still full confidence in the counseled leader.

The counseled leader leaves knowing that he has been held accountable and now has a broader accountability—accountability to change the culture to fundamentally prevent the behavior that resulted in the incident. There was a message that the leader wanted his or her subordinates to be successful.

It is essential to hold subordinates accountable, but whenever possible do so in a way that produces engagement, goodness, and change in the organization. It will result in a desire to not let you down, not let the organization down, and not let their Soldiers down. They will be tough, focused, engaged, and compassionate. Hold your Soldiers and formations accountable in a way that they feel you are walking with them when you are not there.

There is plenty of time for threats, fear, and harshness and there will be environments where a leader must take quick and decisive action. And you have the responsibility and legal authority to do that. But leadership is about providing subordinates the encouragement, experience, seasoning, tools, and capability they need to mold a unit to be successful in the Army. Your organization must be prepared to perform when you are not there based on what you have taught them while you were there.

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## Mid-Leave Leader Radio Check

**WHO:** Immediate supervisors, any level

**WHAT:** Phone contact by supervisor halfway through subordinate's leave

**WHY:** Helps Soldiers to do the right thing during leave periods

**WHEN:** Across leave situations

**TIME REQ'D:** Less than 5 min.

**HOW:**

1. Before Soldier goes on leave, supervisor confirms a good contact # (usually a cell), i.e., one that is highly reliable
2. Supervisor notes mid-point of leave & puts date on calendar
3. On that day, supervisor makes brief call; example topics are
  - Just checking to see how things are going
  - What have you been up to & what have you got planned?

**Note:** look for **overconfidence, complacency, indiscipline, and lack of training** for the given activity or equipment  
– *boldfaced items are common causes of accidents*

  - Remind to take proper precautions on things like partying, swimming, boating, hunting, gun handling, late night driving, ATV riding, rock climbing, upcoming weather (snow, ice, fog, rain), etc.
  - Finish with something like "we want you back in one piece" or don't forget your buddies back here"
4. Shouldn't last longer than 3-5 minutes
5. If unable to reach after two tries, leave a message & discuss contact # upon member's return